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First Committee
9th meeting
Wednesday, 15 October 2003, 3 p.m.
New York

Chairman: Mr. Sareva ..... (Finland)

The meeting was called to order at 3.10 p.m.

Agenda items 62 to 80 (*continued*)

General debate on all disarmament and international security agenda items

The Chairman: Before proceeding with our work I should like to remind all delegations that the deadline for submission of draft resolutions under all disarmament and international security agenda items is today at 6 p.m. — less than three hours from now.

Mr. Sharma (India): Allow me to extend to you, Sir, our congratulations on your election to the chairmanship of the First Committee. The Indian delegation assures you of its fullest cooperation in the discharge of your responsibilities. I should also like to recall how ably Uganda chaired the deliberations of the Committee last year. We welcome the new Under-Secretary-General for Disarmament, Ambassador Abe, and wish him a successful term. May I also take this opportunity to convey to the representative of China, and through him to the people of China, hearty felicitations on their maiden manned space flight.

The present session of the First Committee is the occasion to reflect on serious challenges to international security and on the abiding sense of crisis in the disarmament and non-proliferation agenda. The manifestations of this crisis are numerous: a security anomie resulting from no viable paradigm to replace that of the cold-war years; the threat posed by terrorism, assuming even more menacing dimensions, including possible linkages with weapons of mass destruction; unviable or failed States emerging as havens for training and transit for international terror networks; the renewed quest for new armaments; and a hardening predisposition to use force, alongside a heightened perception of threats faced by States to their security interests.

It is a commentary on our times that the feeling of insecurity has not spared the powerful, nor have the weak and vulnerable escaped its all-pervasive embrace. While in each case the sources of insecurity may be different, the net result is that we are witnessing today an international system ripe with suspicion and fear, not merely owing to rivalries between States but, more ominously, owing to threats posed by non-State actors who have access to technologies that are perhaps beyond the reach of many States themselves. These factors have placed an enormous strain on existing multilateral structures and institutions. How tenable are the templates of the conduct of inter-State relations without the principles of multilateralism as enshrined in the United Nations Charter? More importantly, the spirit of genuine multilateralism, which for the weak and the dispossessed could provide insurance and increase their support for, and stake in, an international order, has taken a beating. It is our earnest expectation that the behaviour of States, when underpinned by respect for international law, will also provide the rationale and incentive for making forward movement on the disarmament and non-proliferation agenda.

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It is relevant to recall in the context of the First Committee's work the only consensus document adopted by the international community as a whole, namely the Final Document of the first special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament (SSOD-I), adopted 25 years ago. The Programme of Action in that document is of continuing validity but has remained only partially implemented. In fact, in the priority field of nuclear disarmament, progress has been limited, both in numbers and in being confined to the two biggest possessors of nuclear weapons.

Since the end of the cold war, military power, reinforced with nuclear weapons, has remained a critical arbiter and shaper of global power equations, a fact of life that compelled us to exercise the nuclear-weapons option so as to harmonize our security interests with the prevailing environment. In fashioning our nuclear doctrine, one of minimum credible deterrence, we have nonetheless demonstrated a defensive posture, restraint and responsibility. We have a declared policy of "no first use" of nuclear weapons and a firm commitment to avoid the use of nuclear weapons against non-nuclear-weapon States — except in the event of a major weapons-of-mass-destruction attack on our forces or on the country.

We note with mounting concern that the non-proliferation goals and framework today are beset with a crisis of identity, relevance and effectiveness. Their foundations, albeit endowed with indefinite lifetime extension, have revealed internal fissures that seem to run deep. This does not, however, lessen in the least the obligations accepted by sovereign nations to implement in good faith the international instruments to which they are States parties. The spectre of onward proliferation, shadowy and inscrutable, and the manifest immunity of its provenance, compounds the problem.

India remains committed to its principled stand on global nuclear disarmament based on the firm conviction that progressively lower levels of armaments globally, and imaginative controls over them, will guarantee undiminished security for all. So too will genuine and effective non-proliferation. At the same time, we recognize that the evolving nature of threats and their new manifestations require new and innovative methods to deal with them, consistent with the United Nations Charter and international law. We understand the urgency of exploring, in a constructive manner, how to cope with this problem, and we believe that through dialogue and consultation, agreement can be found on ways and means of achieving the desired ends. This may involve counter-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and their means of delivery or end-use-based controls on related materials and technologies.

In recognition of the widely shared concern of the international community about the heightened dangers posed by the risk of terrorists getting access to weapons of mass destruction, India introduced resolution 57/83 at the previous session of the General Assembly. Its adoption without a vote — reflective of widespread support — is a measure of the shared concerns of the international community and the common determination to combat terrorism, in particular its linkages with weapons of mass destruction. The report of the Secretary-General, which includes views volunteered by member States and relevant international organizations, provides a further basis for the Committee to revisit this critical issue. India, with the co-sponsorship of many States, will bring to the Committee an updated draft resolution on this subject and hopes that it will receive the same unanimous support that last year's resolution received.

As in previous years, my delegation will introduce a draft resolution calling for a convention prohibiting the use of nuclear weapons under any circumstances, as a first step towards reducing the salience of nuclear weapons. The Final Document of the Non-Aligned Movement Summit in Kuala Lumpur supported the negotiation of such a convention by the Conference on Disarmament (CD). So long as nuclear weapons remain, it is also necessary for all States with nuclear weapons to take steps to reduce the risk of their accidental or unauthorized use. Our draft resolution entitled "Reducing nuclear danger" will be presented to the Committee in the expectation of receiving a wide measure of support. We believe that tangible steps to deal with the nuclear danger should be geared to a multilateral process and to verifiability, which would engender the necessary confidence among States.

Conscious of responsibilities arising from the possession of advanced capabilities and technologies, we have demonstrated in practical ways our role as a responsible and credible partner against proliferation. However, the denial of technology to responsible States does not serve non-proliferation but only signals a punitive intent. It also weakens non-proliferation by diverting international attention away from States of

concern. There is a pressing need for an effective and transparent system of export controls that would conform to the objectives of non-proliferation without affecting the peaceful application of related technologies. On the other hand, long-term need is equally pertinent in order to check the dragooning of advances in science and technology to military applications. We will also introduce, as before, a draft resolution entitled "The role of science and technology in the context of international security and disarmament".

India remains committed to making all possible efforts to realize the full potential of the Conference on Disarmament as the single multilateral negotiating forum for disarmament. During our presidency of the Conference and thereafter we have contributed actively to efforts within the Conference to break the current impasse and to reach agreement on a programme of work that is responsive to the widespread desire for launching negotiations for long-awaited and future-oriented agreements.

I should like to reiterate our commitment to participate constructively in the fissile material cut-off treaty negotiations for a non-discriminatory and verifiable treaty to prohibit the future production of fissile materials for nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices. We also remain committed to join international efforts to prevent the weaponization of outer space and to control its further militarization.

As an original State Party to the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC), India is fully committed to ensuring that all the provisions of the CWC are implemented fully and effectively. The results of the first Review Conference of the CWC are reassuring in terms of continuing the undertaking by all its parties to meet their respective obligations. For our part, we have a record of verified and transparent compliance with our obligations to keep the time-lines for the destruction of these weapons. At the same time, there is a need to ensure that the actions of others do not impair the integrity of the CWC and its objective of timely and global chemical disarmament.

India is deeply concerned at the lack of substantive progress in meaningful multilateral efforts to strengthen the Biological Weapons Convention (BWC), particularly at a time of the heightened threat of biological-weapons proliferation and bioterrorism. While every effort should be made to revive this process without delay, we must uphold at all costs the uneroded 30-year norm against biological weapons.

India remains committed to constructive engagement for the timely implementation of the Programme of Action to address the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons. Ambassador Rakesh Sood of India chaired the Group of Governmental Experts pursuant to General Assembly resolution 56/24 V, which recommended a decision to negotiate, under United Nations auspices, an international instrument to enable States to identify and trace, in a timely manner, small arms and light weapons. We hope that no effort will be spared to maintain the momentum generated by the substantive consensus reflected in the work of this Group.

We attach particular importance to carrying forward the process related to certain conventional weapons, which offers a unique forum for progressive controls over a specific category of weapons through international consensus-building and cooperation. It will be India's privilege to chair the next annual meeting of States parties to be held in Geneva in December. India has also contributed to efforts to review the continuing operation and further development of the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms.

We find that notions of a cold-war-like balance of power have returned to the disarmament debate, piggybacking on a military expenditures theme. The realities on the ground are that the post-cold-war peace dividend that was witnessed in the West somehow escaped most of our region and Asia. While India reduced military spending in the early 1990s, around us high levels of it persisted. Even now, our military spending as a percentage of gross domestic product (GDP) is the lowest among the major countries and is subject to transparent and watchful parliamentary processes. India has joined no arms race. Vast land and sea frontiers, diverse security threats — both traditional and non-traditional — and inflationary pressures underlie our military budget — averaging about 2.3 per cent of GDP over the past decade.

Despite the daunting challenges that confront us, our efforts must be imbued with a new and reinvigorated spirit of multilateralism, so as to address these challenges collectively on the basis of inclusive equitable and transparent approaches. Revitalization of the disarmament and non-proliferation agenda — one

of the main themes before the Committee — will be crucially dependent on the extent to which the Committee is able to contribute to that objective.

Mr. Mekel (Israel): Allow me at the outset, Sir, to congratulate you on your assumption of the chairmanship of the First Committee. We are confident of your ability to guide us through our deliberations. As the world faces change and the international community seeks better ways to improve the security of mankind through future arms control, your task is certainly not easy and is very challenging. Let me assure you, Sir, of my delegation's full support during the weeks ahead under your guidance. I should also like to congratulate Under-Secretary-General Abe on his recent appointment to his important position and wish him much success in carrying out his important task.

During the past year we have witnessed some promising developments that we hope will contribute to security, peace and international stability. At the same time, the international community has also had a sobering experience as it has become more aware of the growing threats that undermine the prospects for a safer world. The menace posed by Saddam Hussein to the peoples of the region and to international stability has been removed. At the same time, the continued proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and their means of delivery, as well as actions by some States that violate their international commitments, have evolved from being a topic of discussion in closed intelligence and policy circles to a problem widely recognized by Governments and peoples. This reality, together with the fear of terrorism directed at the civilian population by means of man-portable air defence systems (MANPADS), for example, and in particular the possibility that terrorists will start using nuclear, chemical and biological weapons, presents innocent civilians throughout the world with a more concrete threat this year. The increased attention of the international community to the threats presented by rogue States and terrorist organizations inspires hope that at this juncture we are on the verge of conceptual change and that next year we will see more focus and practical actions to overcome very real threats to security and stability. Unfortunately, a large part of this reality is playing itself out in the Middle East.

The continued proliferation of nuclear, chemical and biological weapons and ballistic missiles, together with the reluctance of certain States to comply with their international commitments, does grave harm to the credibility of disarmament and arms control efforts and their ability to promote security and stability in the Middle East. We believe the time has come to admit that not all States have equally noble intentions when they commit themselves to arms control treaties. It is not always possible to count on their genuine cooperation. Regrettably, some join those arrangements only in order to obtain technology for military purposes under false pretexts. In our attempt to promote conventions and multilateral agreements in the field of disarmament and arms control, we must not forget that they are not in themselves the goal but merely one of the means to an end, namely the achievement of peace, security, stability and trust among nations. We should also be realistic in our assessments and not deny the limited ability of arms control mechanisms effectively to address security challenges.

These challenges emanate from certain regional conditions and thus require regional solutions. Israel is a committed and active partner in the effort to promote global peace and security through arms control, disarmament and proliferation prevention. This year is particularly noteworthy in this regard as Israel took upon itself for the first time the rotating presidency of the Conference on Disarmament and served as a Vice-Chairman of the Working Group charged with preparing for the fourth special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament (SSOD-IV). In addition, Israel was active in other groups, such as the Group of Governmental Experts on the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms, and other international forums that seek to promote security and stability. Israel is looking forward to expanding its involvement in the international quest for a way effectively to curb proliferation.

The reality of the Middle East is unique. Israel must face countries and organizations with declared intentions to destroy it — enemies that are constantly acting to terrorize and harm Israel's civilian population, and neighbours that have never given up their ambitions to develop their weapons-of-mass-destruction capabilities, either clandestinely or openly. When there are attempts to undermine, weaken and limit Israel's ability to defend itself and there is no process of building confidence, peace, reconciliation and hope, the unavoidable result is less security and less stability. In this reality, the options of unilateral *transparency, unilateral disarmament,* and unilateral

arms limitations cannot contribute to peace, security and stability, but may actually lead to escalation of the conflict.

If there is to be any chance of common security, arms control and disarmament in the Middle East, all of the peoples in the region must come to terms with the existence of the State of Israel, establish a stable relationship of peace and conciliation with Israel, and cease their political and military attempts to threaten its existence. The next step would then be to embark on a joint process aimed at regional security-building. Concurrently, it is important to act with courage and determination with regard to the trend towards proliferation among the States in the region, their reluctance to comply with their arms control commitments, and their tendency to shelter and support terrorist organizations.

For its part, Israel has consistently attached great importance to the proliferation challenge and has placed that challenge high on its security policy priorities. We share the view of those States that have placed this issue at the top of the arms control agenda. Accordingly, Israel fully supports the efforts of potential suppliers to enhance cooperation and coordination in order to improve export controls over sensitive items. Israel associates itself with these efforts and acts accordingly. Peace and conciliation on the one hand and the prevention of terrorism and weapons-of-mass-destruction proliferation on the other, constitute the necessary foundations for progress in disarmament and arms control initiatives in the context of the Middle East.

Israel intends to continue and increase its cooperation with international efforts to curb illicit trafficking in small arms and light weapons, and to curtail the trafficking of weapons-related materials, both conventional and non-conventional, wherever there is a danger that they will reach the hands of terrorists and their supporters. States have a national responsibility to increase control over dangerous substances and small arms and light weapons within their borders and to exercise strict and robust control over their export.

Over the years the First Committee has become an arena for wrangling between the different interests of groups and States. That situation is particularly true in the case of Israel, in that resolutions have usually amounted to no more than counterproductive condemnations divorced from the reality in our region. The time has come for the Committee to reassess its approach to the handling of issues in its field, so that the real threats posed to the security of mankind are effectively addressed. After all, that is the reason behind the establishment of the First Committee. We have an important task at hand for the sake of future generations. We believe that we are now standing at a turning point that calls for wise and careful consideration of the way we conduct our business. We must make better use of our time and resources to deal with the serious problems regarding global peace and security, rather than repeating anachronistic declarations and resolutions. One cannot solve old problems with new mistakes.

In the course of our deliberations our delegation to the First Committee intends to clarify Israel's position regarding various draft resolutions on the agenda, including, of course, those concerning the Middle East. We trust that the First Committee will rise to the daunting challenges that face it and we wish it much success in enhancing the security of us all.

Mr. Ben Youssef (Tunisia) (*spoke in French*): It is my particular pleasure, on behalf of the Tunisian delegation, to offer you, Sir, my most sincere congratulations on your election to the chairmanship of the First Committee, and to assure you of our full support and cooperation in the conduct of our work. I should also like to take this opportunity to congratulate Mr. Nobuyasu Abe on his appointment to head the Department for Disarmament Affairs as Under-Secretary-General for Disarmament Affairs. I should also like to pay homage to his predecessor, Mr. Jayantha Dhanapala, for all his efforts during his term of office.

The new international context that has developed in the past two years has highlighted the role of the United Nations in the area of disarmament and international security. Today more than ever before we are aware of the need to strengthen the role of international law and respect by States for disarmament and non-proliferation agreements and treaties and their effective implementation. We are also convinced that the international community has a duty to favour moderation and tolerance, to support dialogue between civilizations, cultures and religions, and to strengthen solidarity between peoples and nations without conflict or confrontation. The excessive imbalances that we see at the level of the economy and technology can fuel

extremism, fanaticism and hatred. We must ensure here at the United Nations that we do not provoke or exacerbate those states of mind. Tunisia has always believed that the arms race jeopardizes the most basic needs of civilian populations and their development. It is a priority for all of us to redirect those resources used for military ends to development.

At the Millennium Summit the international community set out major goals in order to relaunch the disarmament process, which had slowed down considerably. Here, it is important to recall the unprecedented decision that was taken by the nuclear States at the 2000 Review Conference of States Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), where they made an unequivocal commitment to completely eliminate their nuclear arsenals in pursuance of article VI of the NPT.

In this context, Tunisia supports all efforts at the international and regional levels to promote multilateralism in the area of disarmament and non-proliferation and we call for the adoption of measures that allow us to rid ourselves of nuclear weapons and to enhance international security. If we seek to eliminate the multilateral element in nuclear disarmament we will weaken binding legal instruments and political commitments. However, it should be recognized that difficulties continue to exist and represent an obstacle to disarmament. The Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) has still not entered into force and the verification Protocol of the Biological Weapons Convention (BWC) has still not been adopted. Similarly, the Conference on Disarmament (CD), the single multilateral negotiating forum for disarmament, continues to encounter problems in setting its programme of work, as has been the case for a number of years. Furthermore, the failure of Member States of the United Nations to reach consensus on the holding of a fourth special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament (SSOD-IV), illustrates the state in which the international community finds itself in this area.

Faced with this alarming situation and while we await the total elimination of nuclear weapons, non-nuclear Powers have the right to demand safeguards against the use or threat of use of these weapons against the security and integrity of countries that have voluntarily renounced nuclear weapons.

The creation of nuclear-weapon-free zones on the basis of arrangements freely arrived at among the States of the region concerned, as well as zones free of weapons of mass destruction, represents an important means to promote non-proliferation at both the regional and international levels. The Middle East continues to be one of the most tense regions in the world owing to the refusal by Israel, an undeclared nuclear-weapon State, to accede to the NPT and place all its nuclear installations unconditionally under the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) safeguards system, despite the many appeals made by countries of the region and by the General Assembly in its many resolutions on this issue. The parties to the NPT made the same request at the preparatory meeting for the 2005 NPT Review Conference. Israel's obstinate behaviour represents a serious obstacle to disarmament in general and to the creation of lasting peace in the region. We also see an exaggerated militarization by Israel, which holds other weapons of mass destruction as well. In the face of this threat it is not reasonable today to deal with the situation on the basis of double standards. We call upon the international community, in particular the Powers with influence, to take credible steps to oblige Israel to respect its international obligations.

Aware of the full significance of the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-personnel Mines and on Their Destruction and of its beneficial effects for international peace and security and for civilian populations throughout the world, Tunisia, which quickly ratified that Convention, completed on 4 September last the destruction of its stockpiles of anti-personnel mines possessed by the Tunisian Army. That was completed before 10 January 2004, the deadline established under the Convention for our country. During that operation, witnessed by the United Nations Resident Coordinator, the Secretary-General of the Tunisian Red Crescent and the national press, 2,331 mines were destroyed, bringing the total number of mines destroyed to 17,575. My delegation would like in that connection to congratulate Thailand on the success of the Fifth Meeting of States Parties to the Convention, which took place from 15 to 19 September 2003.

The adoption in July 2001 of the Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its

Aspects is an important step forward for multilateral disarmament. The holding of the First Biennial Meeting, which took place in New York in July 2003 under the brilliant chairmanship of Japan, was a further success in this area.

On the basis of these facts and its own convictions, Tunisia is adopting an active role in the various geographical groupings to which it belongs, in particular the Arab-Maghreb Union, which we consider is an historic achievement and strategic choice. In Africa Tunisia has been active since the 1960s and has contributed to the restoration and consolidation of peace and security through its participation in peacekeeping operations. Our country strives also to support the association agreement with the European Union (EU). This is a foundation stone for cooperation and solidarity between the two shores of the Mediterranean, which will contribute to strengthening partnership in the Mediterranean and to facing the challenges threatening the region, including terrorism in all its forms and manifestations.

Much still needs to be done to achieve our objectives but we hope that progress will be made towards promoting peace and security. The most just outcome would be to achieve general and complete disarmament and those countries that hold these deadly and destructive weapons should set an example. My country will continue to contribute to the cause of disarmament.

Mr. Alhariri (Syrian Arab Republic) (*spoke in Arabic*): It pleases me to express to you, Sir, our congratulations on your election to the chairmanship of the Committee. We are fully confident that your skills and vast experience will allow us to bring the work of the Committee to a constructive and successful conclusion. We wish to extend our congratulations to the members of the Bureau on the confidence they have gained and would also thank Mr. Abe, Under-Secretary-General for Disarmament Affairs for his statement and wish him every success in the responsibilities that he has undertaken, reaffirming our total cooperation with him so that the Committee may reach the best results.

The state of international peace and security seems to be bleak. The statements of Heads of State or Government and Ministers for Foreign Affairs were clear and frank in depicting the real political scene. No statement failed to remind us of the importance of promoting the role of the United Nations, reaffirming the role of multilateralism in international relations and criticizing selectivity and unilateralism in dealing with international affairs in the international political arena. Most States referred to the importance of returning to a commitment to principles and the importance of collective action in accordance with international legality in spirit and letter in terms of international agreements, and of staying free of unilateralism and the use or threat of use of force because that has damaged international relations and has led it to dangers and to endless chaos and instability.

The Final Document of the 1978 first special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament determined the priorities for the international community to work seriously towards nuclear disarmament. Those priorities were set out in a special agenda to be dealt with in the Conference on Disarmament for a period of 25 years. But the lack of political will by some Powers has impeded international efforts and stopped the Conference from carrying out the responsibilities entrusted to it. Double standards have become a main feature. At a time when nuclear arsenals are being developed, stockpiles of nuclear weapons are increasing, and new kinds of weapons are being developed, pressures are being put on States to stop them from acquiring means of defence for their security and sovereignty, a right that is safeguarded by the United Nations Charter, international law and international agreements. At a time when everybody aspires to the total eradication of nuclear weapons and to bringing about the universality of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), those who have acquired such weapons outside the NPT regime are being deliberately ignored and are also given support at a time when member States of the NPT are being prevented from using this technology for peaceful purposes and development.

We wish to reaffirm our support for holding the fourth special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament in order to review and evaluate the implementation of the first special session. We hope that this will provide an opportunity to review the most important aspects of disarmament from a perspective more appropriate to the present state of international affairs in order to diligently bring about an end of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction in a comprehensive manner and to bring

about general and complete disarmament under effective international control.

The Middle East is distinguished by something really horrifying that threatens the stability and security of the area and the world. Israel, by possessing a huge arsenal of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction, by its continuing occupation of Arab territories, by waging war on Arab States that entrenches its expansionist and aggressive policies against Arab States, and by its continued refusal to adhere to the NPT as a non-nuclear-weapon State and to subject all its nuclear activities to the comprehensive regime of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), threatens the security of the region and the world. All the Arab countries and the countries of the Middle East have adhered to the NPT except Israel, which still refuses to adhere to the Treaty and impedes the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East. My country, on the basis of its belief in the importance of establishing such a nuclear-weapon-free zone, presented an initiative to the Security Council in June 2003 that aims at eradicating from the region all types of weapons of mass destruction, whether chemical, biological or nuclear. But those who accuse others of acquiring such weapons are the ones who have obstructed and impeded our initiative. Syria once again reaffirms its call to the international community to support this initiative and to give it the necessary momentum to bring about its implementation.

Israel refuses to abide by international legality to bring about a just and comprehensive peace in the Middle East on the basis of Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973), the Madrid Conference, and the Arab initiative adopted by the Beirut summit in 2002. It continues its aggressive expansionist policies, which are based on a huge arsenal of all forms of conventional and non-conventional weapons and weapons of mass destruction, prominent among which are nuclear weapons. Israel continues to seek to escalate the situation in the region and to export its internal crises, which are caused by occupation and by not recognizing the right of the Palestinian people to establish an independent state on their own soil, and continues its repressive policies against the Palestinians by killing women and children, demolishing houses, closures and assassinations. The aggression undertaken by Israel against my country on 5 October is further evidence of the terrorist and aggressive policies of Israel, which aim at escalating the situation and making it volatile until it reaches a point where it cannot be controlled. It disregards the fact that its continued occupation of Arab territories and its repressive policies are the only reasons for the crisis which it is trying to export to the area. In response to this, Syria has resorted to the United Nations and to international legality as the United Nations is the appropriate place to deal with this matter and in order to condemn Israel and deter it from continuing its aggressive policies in the region.

We reaffirm once again that the presence of sincere political will is the only true way to bring about general and complete disarmament under full international supervision. Sincere political will, a commitment to international legality and to implementing United Nations resolutions, will bring about what humanity looks forward to in terms of international peace and security.

Mr. Al-Banai (Kuwait) (*spoke in Arabic*): Permit me first to convey to you, Sir, on behalf of Kuwait, our warmest congratulations on your assumption of the chairmanship of the First Committee. We are convinced that, based on your experience and wisdom, the work of the Committee will be crowned with success. We also wish to take this opportunity to express our delegation's readiness to cooperate with you to ensure that our work will be fruitful. Our congratulations are also addressed to the other members of the Bureau on their election.

Allow me also to express our gratitude to Mr. Dhanapala for everything he has done over the past five years, and to welcome Mr. Abe as Under-Secretary-General for Disarmament Affairs. We thank him in particular for his statement at the beginning of this session, because that important statement highlighted all the issues to which my country gives utmost priority. Mr. Abe spoke about the terrorist attacks that hurt Japan, the United States and the international community and insisted on the fact that terrorist organizations are able to manufacture weapons of mass destruction and to use them. He also mentioned that terrorism follows no religion, nationality, or borders. Consequently, we cannot remain idle, waiting for the day that this scourge is eliminated. Kuwait, as members know, was the victim of terrorism and was threatened with the use of weapons of mass destruction. Certainly the international community has shown solidarity and resolve to put an end to this

scourge. It is regrettable, however, that the same resolve and spirit were not shown regarding the elimination of another scourge that threatens international peace and security. I am referring here to nuclear weapons and weapons of mass destruction. That is the case despite the clear dangers that nuclear weapons present and despite international measures taken to eliminate such dangers. These measures are contained in the Final Document of the 1978 first special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament, in addition to all the other international conventions that have been adopted and ratified by Kuwait. We have ratified the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production, Stockpiling and Use of Chemical Weapons and on Their Destruction, the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production and Stockpiling of Bacteriological (Biological) and Toxin Weapons and on Their Destruction, the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) safeguards system and the Protocol on the NPT, and the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty. Kuwait is therefore convinced of the importance of nuclear security and for that reason it ratified this year the two agreements on early warning in the case of nuclear accidents and the IAEA Additional Protocol on comprehensive safeguards. We have encouraged other countries to do the same, and countries that have adhered to the agreements on comprehensive safeguards but have not adhered to the Protocol are urged to do so. Israel is the only State in the Middle East region that has not adhered to the NPT and that possesses nuclear weapons in violation of all international resolutions and all the repeated appeals that have been made to adhere to the Treaty, to eliminate immediately its nuclear arsenal and to subject its nuclear facilities to the IAEA safeguards regime. Israel poses an imbalance of power and unrest in the region.

The Iraqi regime and the threat presented by it no longer exist. That regime was in itself a weapon of mass destruction, a weapon that caused the deaths of millions of innocent people. Security Council resolution 687 (1991) was aimed at having the Middle East region free of weapons of mass destruction. Israel continues to constitute the last and main obstacle keeping us from having a region completely free of weapons of mass destruction. Kuwait therefore appeals to all Member States to cease to provide scientific and technological means that facilitate the development of Israel's nuclear programme. It also appeals to all other States that may wish to develop programmes of weapons of mass destruction to refrain from doing so.

We welcome the proposal by the Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan, on the need to convene an international conference to determine the means to eliminate nuclear dangers as was called for in the final Declaration of the Millennium Summit. We would like to recall the Advisory Opinion adopted by the International Court of Justice in July 1997 on the *Legality of the Threat or Use of Nuclear Weapons* to settle conflicts. We support international arrangements to give non-nuclear States guarantees against the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons against them. We reiterate our support for concluding a non-discriminatory and multilateral convention that can be internationally verified to prohibit the production of fissile material that can be used in manufacturing nuclear and other explosive weapons.

Kuwait cannot find any justification for the fact that some countries continue to possess nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction. There is also no justification for delaying the implementation of the thirteen steps for eliminating nuclear weapons as agreed to in the 2000 Review Conference on the NPT. These lethal weapons have become obsolete. It is time to take political decisions to implement the necessary measures agreed to internationally to rid the world of weapons of mass destruction. Nuclear non-proliferation and the elimination of nuclear weapons are the two main pillars of mutual support. No one Treaty can be implemented without the other. Certainly the spectre of nuclear war still exists but Kuwait believes that the only way to ensure that weapons of mass destruction and nuclear weapons are not used consists in eliminating them definitively and ensuring that they will not be manufactured or used again.

Regarding the implementation of the agreement on the comprehensive safeguards regime between the IAEA and North Korea, my delegation is concerned about the fact that there has been no observance of that agreement. My delegation hopes that the Democratic People's Republic of Korea will adopt all necessary corrective measures to act in conformity with the NPT and with the IAEA comprehensive safeguards agreement to ensure that no threat is posed to the security of the Korean Peninsula and the whole world. We welcome the recent efforts made to alleviate the problem at meetings convened in Beijing to that end.

Based on the principle of transparency in the field of disarmament, my delegation believes that all countries should participate in the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms. All weapons systems in Kuwait are conventional and for defense purposes in conformity with the United Nations Charter as well as following all international laws and norms. In addition, my delegation will continue to make every possible effort to strengthen peace and security in our region, particularly in Iraq. Since the end of military operations in Iraq, Kuwait has adopted all necessary measures to assist Iraq, that is, aid estimated at hundreds of millions of dollars in the humanitarian, security and economic areas. Kuwait will also participate at the Conference of the donor countries to be held in Madrid on 23 and 24 October in order to support the Iraqi people. That is our duty. What we are trying to do is simply to heal the wounds, to turn a page and help our Iraqi brothers to recover their sovereignty so that they may enjoy the security and stability that they deserve.

The world has seen a number of crises and we look to the future with some concern and pessimism. We must put our people's interests above all. We must ensure that future generations will benefit from improved living conditions. We must be able to establish peace and security so that the future is better for all the peoples of the world.

Mr. Al-Aifan (Saudi Arabia) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, I extend to you, Sir, my sincere congratulations on your election to the chairmanship of the First Committee and express our full confidence in your wise leadership of the work of this important Committee in order to reach all the desired positive results. We wish you and the members of your Bureau all success. I also reaffirm the full readiness of my delegation to cooperate with you in order to reach the results to which we all aspire.

It also pleases me to extend my congratulations to Mr. Nobuyasu Abe on the occasion of his appointment as Under-Secretary-General for Disarmament Affairs. We are fully confident that his vast experience and knowledge will contribute to enriching the efforts made within this framework.

This year's session of the Committee is being held as we view with extreme concern the limited success that has been achieved in the areas of disarmament and non-proliferation. There are several reasons for this, the most important being the lack of necessary balanced, objective mechanisms and controls. Despite that, the limited success that has been achieved should not be a source of frustration. On the contrary, it should be an incentive for more serious work and constructive participation in order to overcome the impediments and shortcomings. Here I should like to reaffirm once again the determination of my Government to continue in this direction, with its firm approach and positive participation in regional and international efforts aimed at benefiting the whole of humanity. Here I wish to point out the firm position of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia which always calls for a commitment to all the provisions and articles of the United Nations Charter and the principles of international legality to bring about international peace and security and to consolidate the principles of disarmament for all types of weapons of mass destruction. My delegation wishes to emphasize its sincere support for the efforts of the United Nations and other international and regional efforts aimed at disarmament and the establishment of security. We believe that such efforts embody the world's conscience, without which the whole of humanity cannot live in peace and security.

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia has supported every international effort that has been made to eliminate all forms of weapons of mass destruction in all regions of the world in a final and definitive manner. It was one of the first States to sign the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production, Stockpiling and Use of Chemical Weapons and on Their Destruction.

It also adheres to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) and refrains from the production or acquisition of nuclear weapons or nuclear explosive devices or allowing any third party to deploy such weapons on its territory. It has participated effectively in the intensive efforts made by the Arab League through the Ad Hoc Technical Committee entrusted with drawing up a draft convention to establish a zone free of weapons of mass destruction in the Middle East.

My Government has taken all possible measures to combat the phenomenon of the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons by promulgating many regulations, laws and establishing relevant governmental apparatus and bodies to safeguard the actual security control concerning the production or

acquisition of these weapons, as well as their import, export, re-export, or illicit trafficking and in the stockpiling, marking and abolition of such weapons. The report presented by the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia to the United Nations Department for Disarmament Affairs on the measures taken by the Government to implement the Programme of Action adopted by the United Nations Conference on the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects, is a detailed document on all the aforementioned rules, directives and regulations. In this context, I should also like to underline what occurred at the First Biennial Meeting of States to consider the implementation of the aforementioned Programme, which was held in New York from 7 to 11 July 2003, and the decisions that were taken by consensus, and express our hope that this will be a first serious step to bring about the objectives of the Programme.

We view with profound concern the crisis that the Conference on Disarmament is facing. My delegation participated in the meetings of the Conference on Disarmament held between 31 March and 17 April 2003. We had great hopes that the two reports presented by the Chairmen of the two Working Groups were a consensus that reflected a collective and serious will to bring about disarmament.

My Government gives all its attention to efforts aimed at the elimination of weapons of mass destruction from the Middle East, including the region of the Arab Gulf, through its support for the efforts of the Arab League in accordance with the resolution of the Council of the Arab League at its 101st session. This resolution called for making this sensitive area of the world a region free of all weapons of mass destruction in all their forms, whether nuclear, chemical or biological. The Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, in his statement to the General Assembly during the general debate, affirmed that what is a source of real surprise is that at a time when the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) is intensifying its monitoring and control of the activities of member States of the NPT, we see it ignoring Israel's continued refusal to adhere to that Treaty. Hence its nuclear programmes are still outside the comprehensive safeguards and controls of the IAEA, thus posing a danger to peace and security in the region. We believe in the importance of the NPT through activating the means of inspection, monitoring and control of the safeguards of such facilities and achieving their universality. We believe that it is very important to set up criteria and benchmarks that will bring about the progress to which we all aspire in the area of disarmament in all weapons of mass destruction. On this basis, we call upon all States that have not yet adhered to the NPT to start taking the necessary steps towards adherence to that Treaty and subjecting their nuclear facilities to international safeguards and control.

Success in establishing nuclear-weapon-free zones in some areas of the world has been achieved by the cooperation of States and the inevitability of peaceful coexistence, which is a positive step towards establishing a world free of weapons of mass destruction. We are sincerely happy about the success that has occurred in these regions. At the same time we view the Middle East with concern, as it has regretfully been unable to achieve a nuclear-weapons-free zone because of Israel's refusal to listen to the voice of reason and wisdom and because of its continued disregard of the calls of the United Nations, the IAEA, the conferences of the Non-Aligned Movement and the Organization of the Islamic Conference to refrain from developing, producing or testing nuclear weapons. In addition, Israel has not adhered to the NPT, has refused to subject its nuclear facilities to the IAEA's international full-scope safeguards regime and has not been enthusiastic about establishing a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East. Therefore, Israel continues to be the only State in the region possessing nuclear weapons and programmes and chemical weapons outside international controls. That Israeli position, and all the justifications that it presents, blatantly contradict its claim of a sincere wish for peace. Real peace must be based on the confidence and good will of the peoples and countries of the region and not on the basis of the possession of nuclear weapons or the threat of the use of such weapons, or by imposing hegemonistic policies that are a source of concern and a threat to the peoples of the region. It also constitutes a threat to international peace and security. The most important piece of evidence of this is what the Middle East has witnessed today in terms of the escalating, repressive and brutal Israeli policies in the occupied Arab territories, which have returned the region to a state of crisis and tension and have obstructed international and Arab efforts aimed at bringing about a just and lasting peace in the Middle East. On this basis, the Government of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia calls upon Israel — the only State in the

region that has not yet adhered to the NPT — to take the necessary practical steps as urgently as possible to adhere to that Treaty in accordance with the relevant resolutions adopted by the General Assembly and Security Council. We call upon it to subject all its nuclear activities to the full-scope safeguards of the IAEA so that the Middle East will be a nuclear-weapon-free zone and a zone free of all weapons of mass destruction. We call upon all the States of the world to make every effort possible to change the Israeli Government's negative approach by refraining from providing any form of financial, scientific or technical assistance that could contribute to the development or continuation of the Israeli nuclear programme.

My delegation appreciates your invitation, Sir, and that of several other Member States, to carry out reforms in the work of the Committee. We wish to express our conviction that reform in terms of principle is a positive matter on which everybody agrees. We reaffirm my country's readiness to support any sincere effort to reform the work of the Committee on condition that it will play an effective role, have credibility, be just, free from double standards, and contribute to what we would all like to bring about in terms of ridding the world of the evils of all forms of conventional weapons or nuclear, chemical or biological weapons as it contributes to promoting international peace and security.

The world today faces serious and huge challenges which puts many heavy responsibilities on the shoulders of the Organization to maintain international peace and security. We in the First Committee bear a large part of this responsibility as we deal with matters such as disarmament on which to a great extent the fate of the world depends. We have great hope that our working methods will be objective and serious, that we will take a long-term view and will act in a concomitant manner with the dangers and challenges that we face. We hope, therefore that we will contribute to bringing about international peace and security and the welfare and prosperity of all humanity.

Mr. Martirosyan (Armenia): As this is my first intervention in the Committee, let me extend my congratulations to you, Sir, on your election to the chairmanship of the First Committee, as well as to the members of the Bureau, and to assure you of my delegation's full cooperation during the work of this session.

The events of 11 September 2001 and following developments have revealed growing concern at the limited progress achieved during past years to address the new challenges to international security. The memory of those events is a constant reminder of the need to redouble our efforts to push forward the international agenda of disarmament, non-proliferation and arms control through strict observance of existing international instruments and the strengthening of multilateralism. The issue of the non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and effective export controls has also gained the utmost importance.

Armenia's geographical location and its wider geopolitical neighbourhood puts it in a position where it inadvertently confronts the issue of safeguarding against the trafficking of weapons, delivery systems and various sensitive materials. Nuclear safety continues to remain a matter of the highest priority for my country. Armenia fully shares the objectives of the international community regarding non-proliferation and the promotion of the peaceful use of nuclear energy. From the outset Armenia has rejected the option of developing nuclear energy other than for peaceful purposes. Being the first country in the Commonwealth of Independent States to sign the Comprehensive Safeguards Agreement and its Additional Protocol with the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) and to implement the Agreement itself, Armenia is successfully moving forward towards strengthening cooperation in this field. Shortly after the formal accession to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) as a non-nuclear-weapon State, my country undertook the obligation to place all nuclear activities under IAEA safeguards, which it fulfils successfully.

I should like to take this opportunity to mention some positive and encouraging developments. We welcome the adoption of the International Code of Conduct against Ballistic Missile Proliferation, one of the important initiatives launched by the international community towards further regulation of outstanding disarmament issues. It is noteworthy that Cuba and Timor-Leste have joined the NPT, which is a positive contribution to the process of nuclear disarmament and another step towards the universalization of that Treaty. We also very much welcome the entry into force of the United States-Russian Federation Strategic Offensive

Reductions Treaty, also known as the Moscow Treaty. In touching upon the question of United States-Russian Federation cooperation in the field of security, I should also like to mention another important topic.

The issue of the non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction is on the joint United States-Russian Federation agenda and there are practically no serious disagreements. That is the very issue that could outweigh many others. By taking a strong hold of it, it would be possible to deepen and broaden cooperation between the two countries on a whole range of political and economic issues. The long-term strategic partnership between the United States and Russia seems to be on the agenda of both countries and prospects, hopefully, are realistic. The success of such cooperation would have a positive impact not only on both countries but also on the whole system of global and regional security.

We believe that effective international export control regimes play an important role in the further advancement of disarmament and nuclear non-proliferation. My country spares no effort to strengthen its national export control system in a way that would guarantee the legitimate use and trade of dual-use items and technologies while providing the exporter and the international community with due assurances. My delegation is pleased to state here that the Law on State Control over the Export of Dual-Use Items and Technologies, as well as Its Transit through the Territory of the Republic of Armenia went through its first reading in Parliament in September this year. This piece of legislation is of great importance to Armenia as it creates the proper legislative foundation for further strengthening the export control system in the country, one of the key elements of the non-proliferation regime. By the introduction of international non-proliferation criteria to national legislation, Armenia is attempting to establish an effective export control system with optimized export classification, licensing and reporting processes without inflicting unnecessary limitations on international trade.

Armenia successfully cooperates with the international community in preventing the illicit trafficking of small arms and light weapons in accordance with the Armenian law in effect on arms. The Government has successfully established strict control over small arms and light weapons on its territory. My country regularly provides updated information to the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms. However, new threats and challenges to international security make it plain that small arms and light weapons cannot be considered as disarmament and arms-control dimension issues only. Effective international efforts against illicit trafficking in small arms and light weapons cannot but try to deal with it from an inclusive perspective of national, regional and international security on the one hand, and conflict prevention, post-conflict reconstruction and peace-building on the other.

Armenia highly appreciates the efforts of many Governments and non-governmental organizations to lead a worldwide campaign to help address the challenges posed by anti-personnel landmines. The entry into force of the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on Their Destruction is an important step forward towards the total elimination of these extremely harmful conventional weapons. Despite security considerations and the defensive value of anti-personnel landmines, we nevertheless believe that the human and social costs of landmines far outweigh their military significance. Hence, Armenia began taking practical steps in this regard by establishing, with the active support of the United States Government, a demining centre which trains military personnel for mine clearance. The main rationale behind the establishment of such a centre is the recognition of the fact that anti-personnel landmines, buried mainly for defensive purposes, are inflicting injuries and death on non-combatant civilians in a totally indiscriminate manner. Meanwhile, Armenia's full participation in the Ottawa Convention is contingent upon a similar level of political commitment by all neighbouring States.

Armenia welcomes the outcome of the first review Conference of the Chemical Weapons Convention. We believe it reflects the growing importance of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons in combating and preventing the threat of chemical terror, and also taking into account new scientific developments in the chemical industry.

In order to reach disarmament and non-proliferation objectives, vigorous efforts at bilateral, regional and international levels should be pursued. Armenia stands ready to further cooperate in the field of disarmament and non-proliferation and to make a

greater contribution to international and regional efforts towards peace and security.

Mr. Rivas (Colombia) (*spoke in Spanish*): Allow me first to congratulate you, Sir, and the other members of the Bureau, on your well-deserved election to preside over the work of the First Committee during this session of the General Assembly. We are confident that you, Chairman Sareva, because of your vast experience in disarmament affairs, will preside over our meetings with wisdom and balance.

Allow me also to express my gratitude to former Under-Secretary-General for Disarmament Affairs, Jayantha Dhanapala, for his important work over the years in the Department for Disarmament Affairs and extend a warm welcome to our new Under-Secretary-General, Nobuyasu Abe, sure as we are that he will continue the good work with the same dedication and professionalism of his predecessor. He counts on an excellent team at the Department for Disarmament Affairs that supports the work of the Committee and the cause of disarmament and international security.

Colombia associates itself with the statement made by the Permanent Representative of Peru on behalf of the countries members of the Rio Group. However, in this intervention my delegation wishes to clarify and expand on its national position on the various items on the agenda of the Committee that are of particular interest to Colombia. As in previous years, Colombia wishes to begin its intervention by calling the attention of the Committee to the important contribution it should make against terrorism, which today is the most serious threat to international peace and security.

To prevent weapons of mass destruction from falling into the hands of terrorists should be a priority on our agenda. That is why Colombia has been a sponsor since last year of a draft resolution on this topic introduced by India. That is why we insist on universal accession to the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production and Stockpiling of Bacteriological (Biological) and Toxin Weapons and on Their Destruction and the Convention on Prohibitions or Restrictions on the Use of Certain Conventional Weapons Which May Be Deemed to Be Excessively Injurious or To Have Indiscriminate Effects and on the implementation of the Chemical Weapons Convention. We also insist on the explicit prohibition of the use of these weapons of mass destruction and on restricting the development of new technologies for these weapons. There is no doubt that the best guarantee for this is their total elimination. Countries that possess chemical weapons should proceed to destroy them in fulfilment of the Convention and submit detailed plans on this process of destruction. We must also work towards the inclusion of new arms within the scope of implementation of the Convention on the use of certain conventional weapons and towards the adoption of new protocols in this field. With regard to the Convention on bacteriological weapons, it is fundamental to advance towards an agreement on a verification protocol.

If progress with respect to these weapons of mass destruction remains unsatisfactory, neither have the advances made with regard to the foremost weapons of mass destruction — nuclear weapons — been satisfactory. Not all members of the international community have thus far acceded to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) and there is not enough progress in the Preparatory Committee for the 2005 NPT Review Conference. Colombia reiterates the urgency of the full implementation of the 13 measures for nuclear disarmament included in the Final Document of the 2000 NPT Review Conference. We welcome efforts such as the Moscow Treaty but we consider that we are still far from achieving the unequivocal commitments acquired by the nuclear-weapon States, and that makes it even more difficult to maintain the non-proliferation regime.

A very important juridical instrument for the global non-proliferation regime is the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT). Colombia signed that Treaty in 1996 and has always acted in conformity with its spirit. We have reiterated in all international disarmament meetings our total commitment to the CTBT as an instrument to achieve general and complete disarmament. In the conferences on facilitating the entry into force of the Treaty we have elaborated on the need to identify and implement specific measures to facilitate the case of Colombia, for example, where there is a political will to ratify but also unavoidable constitutional and legal constraints on doing so.

On the issue of disarmament and non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and their means of delivery, as with other weapons of mass destruction, Colombia reiterates its belief that their

total elimination is the best guarantee of international peace and security. We reject the doctrines of deterrence and strategic alliances and the doctrine that proposes new uses for nuclear weapons, since they are based on force or the threat of use of force. We continue to believe that general and complete disarmament under effective international control is not a Utopia but a necessity that is becoming increasingly imperative for international peace and security, given the new challenges we face.

Therefore, we are particularly concerned that the Conference on Disarmament, the main forum for negotiations, has reached its seventh year without reaching an agreement on its programme of work regarding issues that we all recognize as being substantive and of priority importance for international security. Therefore we are also concerned that during three years of deliberations the United Nations Disarmament Commission has not been able to reach a consensus on the two items currently on its agenda. Likewise, we insist on the urgency of reaching agreement on the objectives and agenda of the fourth special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament.

Colombia insists on the need to maintain and consolidate a multilateral framework in international relations, particularly on disarmament and international security issues. We share the criticism that on some occasions multilateralism has shown a lack of efficiency effectively to face threats to international peace and security, but we reaffirm the need to reach a renewed and firm commitment on the part of all States to the multilateral option. We invite the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to renew its commitment to the NPT and to allow visits by the inspectors of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA). The development of nuclear weapons does not bring peace, not does it consolidate security. Peace and security nowadays are based not on military capacity but mostly on political, economic and social factors, and particularly on good relations with neighbours and the international community as a whole. Colombia recognizes the right of all States to develop nuclear programmes for peaceful purposes. That is why we are committed, as are all member States of the IAEA, in continuing cooperation with the Islamic Republic Iran to clarify doubts regarding its nuclear programme. Colombia invites the Government of Iran to continue its cooperation with the inspectors to generate confidence in the region and the world.

There are two items on the agenda of the First Committee that are fundamental for Colombia. These are the implementation of the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-personnel Mines and on Their Destruction and the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons. In both these areas we register important progress. We welcome the results of the Fifth Meeting of States Parties to the Ottawa Convention that took place in Bangkok, and insist on urgency to finally achieve universality for the Convention and the participation of those who today are the largest producers of these types of mines. We condemn the production and indiscriminate use of mines by non-State actors and we urge the international community to prevent that from happening. With regard to the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons, we register with satisfaction the First Biennial Meeting to consider the implementation of the 2001 Programme of Action, and the Secretary-General's report on the feasibility of developing an international instrument that will allow States to identify and trace illicit small arms and light weapons. We appreciate the French-Swiss initiative on this issue and commend the work of the governmental experts on the topic under the able chairmanship of Ambassador Sood of India. Convinced as we are that in today's world small arms and light weapons are real weapons of mass destruction, we will continue to support all initiatives on this topic. South Africa coordinates this year the draft resolution entitled "The illicit trade in small arms and light weapons in all its aspects" [(A/C.1/58/L.1)] that, together with Japan and Colombia, we have introduced to the Committee since 2001. As in previous years we expect to have the sponsorship of more than 100 delegations, as well as a consensus approval of the initiative that this year contains important developments.

Allow me to conclude by expressing Colombia's commitment to the agenda on disarmament, non-proliferation and international security considered by the First Committee, and by reiterating our conviction that only a multilateral and shared-responsibility approach to these topics will allow us to maintain international peace and security and to contribute to global efforts against terrorism.

It is in this spirit that my delegation is ready to participate in the informal consultations that you, Sir,

have convened starting tomorrow. We thank the different delegations and groups that have presented initiatives to rationalize the work of the First Committee and enhance its contribution to the maintenance of international peace and security. We will study these initiatives within the general framework of the revitalization of the General Assembly and the reform of the United Nations with the objective of consolidating an effective multilateralism in which the Organization plays a central role.

Mr. Amurani-Phiri (Malawi): At the outset allow me to congratulate you, Sir, on your unanimous election to the chairmanship of the First Committee, and also for the competent manner in which you have steered the proceedings of the Committee thus far. I assure you of my delegation's continued support and cooperation as we strive to reach broad consensus on the issues before the Committee. I also congratulate the entire Bureau of the First Committee on their election. We also wish to extend our sincere thanks to Mr. Kiwanuka, former Permanent Representative of Uganda to the United Nations, for his excellent work as Chairman of the Committee at the last session. Allow me also to congratulate and welcome Mr. Nobuyasu Abe on his appointment as Under-Secretary-General for Disarmament Affairs and thank him for his introductory statement, which contains very useful guidelines for our work.

As we continue the deliberations of the First Committee during this fifty-eighth session of the General Assembly, our sad memories flash back to the tragic bombing of the United Nations headquarters in Iraq on 19 August 2003 and while sharing the grief of this tragedy we remain well aware of how present-day global security and stability is being challenged by easy access to weapons of mass destruction and the increasing threat of international terrorism.

The Malawi delegation recognizes that the ultimate goal of general and complete disarmament can only be achieved on the basis of universal, multilateral and non-discriminatory negotiations. It is with deep disappointment and regret that we see yet another year at the Conference on Disarmament end with no substantive work having been undertaken. It is therefore our belief that unless the major Powers show sufficient flexibility and practical commitment to nuclear disarmament, we will always be confronted with this serious challenge and the at times open disagreements that neither contribute to nor promote international peace and security.

By contrast, on the chemical disarmament front, we seem to have found common ground. Malawi for its part, following various regional conferences of the African National Authorities of the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC), established on 17 July 2003 a national authority composed of officials from various Government ministries, departments and relevant institutions. The National Authority in Malawi has drawn up a plan of activities that it intends to carry out within the next 12 months. These activities will include: preparation for the enactment of legislation, as well as the adoption and implementation of the required administrative and enforcement measures of the CWC; dissemination of information regarding the prohibitions under the Convention, especially to Government officers and departments, media outlets, and science and technology research institutions; and undertaking study tours to States parties that have already established national implementing measures within the African region.

We are strongly committed to ensuring that these and other activities are undertaken within the next few months. However, we are seriously constrained in terms of financial and other resources. We need to train the National Authority personnel and our legal practitioners on how best to enact the laws and implement the administrative measures prescribed in the CWC. In this regard, we appeal to the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons, to our bilateral and multilateral cooperating partners, and other developed countries to come to our assistance towards this end.

Malawi welcomes the successful conclusion of the Fifth Meeting of States parties to the landmines Convention in Bangkok and congratulates Thailand on hosting this very important meeting. As a party to the landmines Convention we hosted a team of experts from the United Nations Mine Action Service who visited Malawi on a fact-finding mission in August 2003. We fully support all efforts aimed at clearing landmines from the face of the earth, as their impact not only hampers economic development, but even now continues to claim the lives of innocent civilian women and children in many post-conflict situations in Africa.

We welcome the outcome of the First Biennial Meeting of States to Consider the Implementation of

the Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects. It is our hope that the report of the Group of Governmental Experts on the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons will generate global, regional and national support towards strengthening international cooperation and transparency in arms transfers.

Finally, Malawi is fully committed to working with you, Sir, to ensure a productive session on issues of great concern in the field of disarmament and the non-proliferation of nuclear weapons.

Mr. Diallo (Guinea) (*spoke in French*): My delegation is extremely pleased to see you, Sir, in the Chair of the First Committee. This wise choice will, I am convinced, contribute to the success of our work. We congratulate you and all the members of the Bureau and you can count on the full cooperation of my delegation in carrying out your delicate task. We also welcome the appointment of Mr. Nobuyasu Abe to the important post of Under-Secretary-General for Disarmament Affairs. We wish him success in his new post. We will always remember his predecessor, Mr. Dhanapala, as a skilled official devoted to disarmament.

We must be victorious in our struggle for peace. But how can we ensure that this dream becomes reality in a world where there are so many subjects of concern. Conflicts continue to bring destruction to many regions of the world. Almost every day terrorism continues to attack blindly and brutally. It does not spare even those faithful servants of the international community who are working for peace. We have only one way to change the situation and to protect mankind from the growing threats of self-destruction. We must strengthen our unity and promote multilateral cooperation in the area of disarmament. More than in any other sphere, in the area of maintaining and enhancing international peace and security we must reflect and act together in a spirit of openness and with a heightened sense of our individual and collective responsibilities for the future of mankind.

The limitation of and reductions in nuclear arms represent a major concern for us. The universal ratification of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons must be encouraged. We must also encourage the complete implementation of the safeguards system of the International Atomic Energy Agency. My country supports all efforts aimed at defending the authority of that important legal instrument. Its application will ensure that the international non-proliferation regime is effective. Here we appreciate the fact that some States at high cost have undertaken the dismantling of their nuclear arsenals while ensuring the careful processing of the fissile materials derived from those weapons. While we hope for further support for the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty, my country welcomes the existence of nuclear-weapon-free zones on the basis of arrangements freely arrived at among the States of the region concerned, and we appeal for further consultations in order to create new such zones, for example in the Middle East, which continues to be a very sensitive region. With respect to biological and chemical weapons, my delegation urgently appeals to all States for the recognition and full and effective application of the various conventions on the prohibition and destruction of those weapons.

The sad reality of the great loss of human life in the various conflicts that have continued to affect the subregion of West Africa, causes us to be greatly concerned at the continuing proliferation and trade in small arms and light weapons. It cannot be denied that the destabilizing accumulation of and trafficking in these arms represents a significant threat to peace and security on the African continent. A lasting solution to this scourge requires that we reinforce cooperation and implement the United Nations Programme of Action, whether it be the detection or repression of violations or implementing legal and administrative measures, there must be effective measures to control the traffic in small arms and light weapons. That requires close collaboration between States at subregional, regional and international levels. The international commissions against the proliferation and traffic in small arms and light weapons are the accepted structures that should be used to develop that cooperation. Here it is essential that there should be a sharing of information and experience.

At the level of the West African subregion this cooperation took shape with the creation in June 2002 in Conakry of a network of National Commissions whose responsibility is to ensure that there is coordination, complementarity and synergy in the efforts made by the States concerned. To ensure that these networks are effective my delegation appeals to our bilateral and multilateral partners to bring the

necessary financial and technical support to ensure that the various objectives of the National Commissions are achieved.

With respect to the follow-up on the United Nations Programme of Action on small arms and light weapons, Guinea, while appreciating the work that has been achieved, agrees with the conclusions of the Group of Governmental Experts which was responsible for examining the feasibility of developing an international instrument to mark and trace illicit small arms and light weapons. We also support the recommendation that calls on the current session of the General Assembly to take a decision that would commit States to negotiate such an instrument under the auspices of the United Nations. My country also calls upon all Member States to implement effectively Security Council resolution 1467 (2003), adopted concurrently with the workshop we organized in March 2003 during our presidency of the Security Council, on the theme of the "Proliferation of small arms and light weapons and mercenary activities: threats to peace and security in West Africa".

With respect to anti-personnel mines my delegation would like to insist on the need to intensify efforts in the area of demining, assistance to demining and mine victims, and also to awareness building. In this context we support the proposal to create a fund for demining and call upon those States who can do so to provide the necessary funding for demining and the rehabilitation of mine victims. We should also stress that in post-conflict countries, demining, which is an expensive operation, will determine whether there is progress in other areas, including the rehabilitation of roads, the return of refugees and the future of agriculture.

My delegation believes that the concerns that have been expressed here today by a number of speakers on the need to rationalize the work of the Committee are justified. The relevance and scope of our work depends on our ability to concentrate on the most important issues in order to deal with them with the necessary attention. Here, the idea of examining some resolutions at two- or three-year intervals is, we believe, a wise decision and could lead to agreement. It is therefore high time to pause for a moment, review critically the progress we have made, and plan for the future with greater authority and hope.

Mr. Al-Ayashi (Yemen) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset I should like to congratulate you, Sir, on your well-deserved election to the chairmanship of the Committee. I am confident that your wisdom and abilities will contribute to the progress of the work to which we all aspire in the fields of disarmament and international peace and stability, which would consolidate the position of the United Nations. We would like also to pay tribute to the valuable efforts of the former Chairman of the Committee. We assure you, Sir, that we will participate in your efforts to ensure the success of our work on this important Committee. I should like also to offer to Mr. Abe our congratulations on his appointment as Under-Secretary-General for Disarmament Affairs, and we wish him every success in his work.

The Government of my country has been keen to support all efforts to maintain international peace and security. It was one of the earliest countries to sign the multilateral international treaties relating to disarmament, non-proliferation and arms control because we believe that these treaties constitute an important element conducive to a world of peace, security and stability.

The United Nations has continually made efforts to address the root causes behind lethal wars and confrontations. These efforts, however, did not bear fruit. Our commitment to disarmament causes is an expression of our clear political vision, supporting all the efforts of the international community and the United Nations in disarmament, which was prescribed in the Final Document of the 1978 first special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament, which gave priority to nuclear disarmament and the disarmament of weapons of mass destruction.

Despite all the efforts of the international community to make the Middle East a zone free of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction, the position of Israel on these weapons is still an impediment to achieving this aim. The fact that Israeli reactors still remain outside international safeguards constitutes a threat to international peace and security and a violation of international resolutions which call on Israel to commit itself to all multilateral treaties. That is why we call on the international community to pressure Israel to accede without conditions to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons and to subject its nuclear, military

and civilian reactors to International Atomic Energy Agency safeguards.

Despite the progress achieved by the United Nations in the field of the establishment of peace in different areas of the world, the Organization still has many problems emanating from the arms race in the face of a lowering of the level of development, especially in developing and poorer countries. The phenomenon of the spread of small arms and light weapons is a subject of great interest to Yemen's political leadership and Government. This phenomenon has many factors resulting from the colonial era in addition to certain social characteristics of the Yemeni people. The Republic of Yemen confirms the need for a legal framework and regulations to control the importation of such weapons that are owned by citizens. Through the media, we aim to enhance the culture against the illegitimate possession of these weapons and call on citizens to rid themselves of these weapons which they acquire through conflict situations. We explain the dangers such weapons represent, especially to young people.

Also, non-governmental organizations in Yemen work with a variety of authorities to raise awareness of the dangers of the illegal possession of these arms and weapons. We should stress the fact that the spread of small arms and light weapons as a result of illegal trafficking is not a cause of the conflicts in many parts of the world, but exacerbates those conflicts. Such conflicts arise from economic, social, human and financial problems, ethnic and religious cleansing, and the increase in indebtedness, poverty and illiteracy in many developing countries, especially the least developed countries. This is a result of the disparities and gaps in economic and trade relations between these countries and developed countries, as is happening these days in Palestine, the occupied Arab lands, and other places.

We urge respect for the norms of international law and the principles of Article 51 of the Charter of the United Nations which guarantees the inherent right of countries to individual or collective self-defence in order to ensure their national security and defend their territorial integrity. Within the framework of their efforts to confront the problems of small arms and light weapons we have called for the expansion of the Register of such weapons through their classification based on their names, calibre and use.

Yemen is one of the countries that have suffered from the scourge of landmines and we have supported all efforts to put an end to them. We were among the earliest to sign and ratify the Ottawa Convention in this field. In the matter of the stocks of mines, the national Yemeni committee, in cooperation with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and with friendly countries, including the United States of America, has destroyed our stock of 66,674 mines. Thus Yemen is the first State party to the landmine Convention to destroy all its stocks of these mines, which are very dangerous because of their low cost and the continuing danger that they pose over decades. Through its national programme to combat mines Yemen has done everything to benefit its society. We have provided social assessments and are assisting mine victims to see to their every need. Our programme in this respect is one of the most successful in the region.

The concerted efforts of the international community to guarantee the implementation of the Charter of the United Nations and its principles, the liberation of people from colonialism, the struggle for their right to liberty, self-determination and better living conditions, and the provision of economic assistance to the least developed and poorest countries in the implementation of international conventions and commitments — all these measures can help to achieve international peace and security.

Mr. Ramón González (Dominican Republic) (*spoke in Spanish*): Permit me on behalf of my delegation to congratulate you, Sir, and the other members of the Bureau, on having been selected for the Bureau of the First Committee. We are familiar with your experience and for that reason we trust that under your direction and leadership our agenda items will be addressed in a wise, effective and practical manner. I also wish to add my country's support to the statement made by the delegation of Peru on behalf of the group of countries members of the Rio Group.

Once again we are gathered here to analyse and consider the major challenges which mankind as a whole faces, and will continue to face, in the areas of security and disarmament. Every year in the First Committee we see that the same causes lead to the same effects. However, their solutions are slow in coming. The point is to know how sincere and transparent are the dialogues and negotiations aimed at facilitating international peace and security through the

appropriate implementation of disarmament instruments and measures. Peace, security and balance constitute, more than ever before, a particularly relevant challenge for our times and an inescapable imperative in building a world that will guarantee the development of nations within a framework of universal harmony.

The Dominican Republic, faithful to its principles of peace, has followed with particular interest the entire Ottawa process and the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on Their Destruction. Many countries are also involved in this process. However, we appeal in particular to those nations which are very active in mine production, and which have not joined in these efforts, to meet their obligations and in particular to provide their expertise, equipment and funds for mine detection and destruction, particularly those in developing countries which suffer from these weapons.

In many of our countries the possession of a firearm is a guarantee of security. For others it is even a symbol of power. Without trying to make out of this a surrealistic picture, in many of our countries one might even ask: "What do you prefer — a job or a gun?", and many perhaps would prefer guns to jobs. That may explain only part of the cause and why so many civilians have so many conventional weapons which increase armed crime, produce deadly activities, and which add to the trafficking in weapons both inside and outside our country. The Dominican Republic, aware of this sad reality, has been developing a programme that aims at combating this culture. The Dominican Republic has increased its armed forces and police personnel. We have conducted a series of operations that have so far collected more than 4,500 firearms. We have also undertaken stricter surveillance and control over arsenals to ensure that individual entities meet the requirements of obtaining a licence for the bearing of firearms, specifically to ensure that psychiatric and other test requirements are complied with. Our Secretariat of State and Police Institution, which is the Government institution in the Dominican Republic charged with controlling licences for the bearing of firearms, has invested more than 4 million pesos in informatics to assist in detecting persons who have illegal arms in their possession. We are committed to guaranteeing the safety of our citizens because we recognize that the illicit trafficking in small arms and light weapons contributes to social instability and directly affects the quality of life of our people.

We are also aware of that because we are part of a region where weapons form a part of our inter-American order. Insofar as conventions that have served as reference points for other international conventions are concerned, we find the Inter-American Convention on Transparency in Conventional Arms Acquisitions, while not an arms limitation treaty, to be nevertheless a fundamental step in the right direction. Without transparency in procurement one cannot think of agreement on inventories.

The countries of Latin America and the Caribbean have expressed themselves on the consolidation of the non-proliferation regime throughout the region through the Treaty for the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons in Latin America and the Caribbean (Treaty of Tlatelolco). This no doubt has helped in the framework of cooperation in the hemisphere and it has made a real contribution to the world's security. The Treaty of Tlatelolco defined a frame of reference for other regions of the world in establishing the first nuclear-weapon-free zone. The Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) goes beyond Tlatelolco and seeks global adherence and universality. We believe that this important Treaty and the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) to be essential pillars of our own security. Despite the fact that the NPT has not fulfilled all the dreams of its States parties, we believe that that Treaty is an international instrument in the field of disarmament, particularly in the field of nuclear disarmament, that has received the widest international acceptance. However we must still promote the objective of its universality, taking into account that some States, especially those in a position to develop nuclear energy for military purposes, are not yet parties to it.

We see at present that various international conferences discuss conventions on the use of nuclear energy. One of these is the Convention governing the damage that may be caused to persons and habitat by radioactive wastes. The Dominican Republic largely depends on tourism, a tourism that seeks beaches and sun. The quality of its coastal waters is of vital importance to the development of the tourist sector and therefore any radioactive damage may destroy this important sector of our national economy. We appeal to the understanding of the international community with

a view to the prompt implementation of mechanisms on security measures applicable to the transport of radioactive material and hazardous wastes, as established by the International Atomic Energy Agency, the International Maritime Organization, and by the adoption of supplementary norms. In particular, my country is especially interested in matters pertaining to safeguards on the pollution of the marine environment, exchange of information on elected routes, communication of disaster relief plans in the commitment to recover materials in dumping situations, the decontamination of affected areas, and the establishment of effective norms and mechanisms of accountability in cases of damage.

International terrorism has become the most dangerous, most difficult, the cruellest and shadiest enemy faced by the civilized world, one which threatens peace. Terrorism constitutes a serious threat to our domestic and international security, to peaceful relations among States, to the development and functioning of democratic institutions throughout the world, and to the realization of human rights. The Dominican Republic has signed and ratified several international agreements to combat terrorism and has attached particular priority to combating international terrorism over the more than 30 years that this item has been on the agenda of the General Assembly. For these reasons we wish to highlight once again the importance of strengthening international cooperation to combat terrorism, regardless of origin, especially by establishing an effective international legal regime. We also believe that that cooperation should be carried out pursuant to the United Nations Charter, the basic principles of international law, human rights, and humanitarian law. We also urge States to become parties to the various international legal instruments in force in the area of prevention and control of international terrorism.

Mankind has been able to ascertain through history, and painfully, that international peace and security cannot be based on atomic balance or on arms races, nor on suspicion or mutual mistrust. It has often been said, and rightly so, that true peace must be based on an acceptance of solidarity, interdependence and respect among States, which are the actors and subject of international law. But my delegation also believes that this solidarity, interdependence and respect should also apply to the true and final beneficiary of international norms, which is the human person.

Mr. Kittikhoun (Lao People's Democratic Republic): First, let me congratulate you, Sir, and other members of the Bureau on your respective elections. We all look forward to the successful completion of the work of this important Committee that we believe can be ensured by your very able chairmanship. I assure you of our full support and cooperation in the exercise of your judicious mandates. I should also like to seize this opportunity to express my sincere felicitations to Mr. Nobuyasu Abe on his appointment as Under-Secretary-General for Disarmament Affairs. Aware as we are of his qualities as a great diplomat, his experience in multilateral diplomacy, we are confident that he will perform good work in assuming that task. We wish him good luck.

We fully align ourselves with the statement made by the Permanent Representative of Myanmar on behalf of the Association of South-East Asian Nations, which reflects the group's positions and approaches to various aspects of disarmament and international security, and the recent efforts undertaken by the Association aimed at turning South-East Asia into a nuclear-weapon-free zone to ensure lasting peace and security in the region and in the world at large.

It is distressing to note the international community's assessment that the current year has witnessed not less but growing violent conflict, heightened tension in international relations, and the fear of terrorism. Recent crises, including the upward spiral of carnage in the Middle East, the bitter split in the Security Council over the Iraq war, and the recent tragic terrorist bombing of the United Nations headquarters in Baghdad, have all challenged the world body and tested the principles of collective security.

In light of the negative developments, we cannot but share the grave concern of the world community about the scant progress made in the process of disarmament. The proposals of the special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament, held 25 years ago, remain unimplemented. The Conference on Disarmament, the single multilateral negotiating forum for disarmament, is still not in a position to finalize its programme of work. This sad situation has led the world community to worry that weapons of mass destruction may be used, or threatened to be used by States or non-State actors. More fearful, is the ominous danger that weapons of mass destruction could possibly fall into the hands of terrorists because of the erosion of the non-proliferation regime.

In order to overcome the formidable challenges, it is critical for the international community to redouble its efforts to strengthen mutual cooperation at national, bilateral, subregional, regional and global levels. First and foremost, we believe that no effort must be spared to find effective ways and means to eliminate all nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction. To this end, due and urgent consideration must be given to the earliest commencement of the negotiation for, and conclusion of, a universal, unconditional, and legally binding instrument on security assurances to non-nuclear-weapon States. In this regard our delegation hopes that the ASEAN-sponsored draft resolution on nuclear disarmament introduced by Myanmar and Malaysia, will enjoy increasing support from Member States, especially the nuclear-weapon States.

The Lao People's Democratic Republic is of the firm belief that the total elimination of nuclear weapons is the only absolute guarantee against the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons. We therefore welcome all efforts at the international, regional and national levels aimed at reducing and eliminating nuclear weapons. In this regard we support the New Agenda Coalition's ministerial declaration, issued during the general debate at the fifty-eighth session of the General Assembly which, among other things, called for the enhancement of activities against nuclear proliferation and the total elimination of nuclear weapons, and stressed the importance of the establishment of internationally recognized nuclear-weapon-free zones that would contribute towards that process for the benefit of global and regional peace and security.

Like other Member States, we are deeply concerned about the potential weaponization of outer space. In this context, we appreciate the relentless efforts pursued by some major nuclear-weapon States towards the conclusion of a new outer-space arms control agreement. We believe that could be achieved should statesmen demonstrate their real political will and spirit of cooperation in pushing forward the existing multilateral process of disarmament.

In our view the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) should serve as a cornerstone for the total and complete elimination of nuclear weapons. The accession of Cuba to the NPT, accompanied by that of Afghanistan and Timor-Leste is encouraging. We welcome the commitments made by these Member States to nuclear disarmament. Yet, adherence to this international instrument in recent years has been problematic. In principle, no State party should have a reason to excuse its non-compliance. However, in light of the changing political and security environment in the world, it is understandable that full compliance — and I stress the words "full compliance" — cannot be achieved unless the mutual security concerns of all parties are assured. In that context it is compulsory for all States parties to this important Treaty, especially the nuclear-weapon States, to fulfil the obligations stipulated in the Treaty. It is also essential that, pending their complete elimination, all nuclear arsenals should be strictly controlled in compliance with the internationally agreed safeguard measures against all the unforeseen risks and catastrophic nuclear accidents. Our delegation believes that the first step to be undertaken by the world community should be the convening, as early as possible, of a United Nations conference on disarmament, whose primary mandate should be to work on the conclusion of a convention on nuclear disarmament. To this end, we hope that the forthcoming NPT Review Conference will take this matter into its particular consideration.

In our perception, no less vital for achieving nuclear disarmament is the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty, which now, regrettably, remains ineffective. As a Member State that has ratified the Treaty, the Lao People's Democratic Republic welcomes the third Conference on Facilitating the Entry into Force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty, held recently in Vienna. Our delegation is also encouraged that to date the Treaty has been ratified by three nuclear-weapon States. However, in order to ensure the entry into force of this important instrument, we call on other member States which have not done so to follow suit as a matter of urgency.

Equally essential for the maintenance of international and regional peace and security is universal adherence to the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production and Stockpiling of Bacteriological (Biological) and Toxin Weapons and on Their Destruction (BWC), especially the strengthening of it through multilateral negotiations for a legally binding Protocol to the Convention. Our delegation is also of the view that the threat of biological weapons as instruments of war and terror has emphasized the urgent need to ensure the

effectiveness of the Convention. In this respect we commend the positive efforts made by States parties to the BWC at the Fifth Review Conference held in Geneva and look forward to making further progress in strengthening the Convention at the Sixth Review Conference in 2006.

In recognizing the importance of nuclear-weapon-free zones as an indispensable contribution to reaching the goal of comprehensive nuclear disarmament, the Lao People's Democratic Republic has been proactive in ASEAN efforts towards the effectiveness of the Bangkok Treaty establishing the South-East Asia Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone. Yet, the said endeavours have remained unsatisfactory, since the Protocol annexed to the Treaty is subject to accession by nuclear-weapon States. While renewing our sincere salutations to the People's Republic of China for its expressed readiness to accede to the Protocol, we earnestly hope that this will serve as an encouragement for other nuclear-weapon States to take action at an early date.

To conclude, I wish to stress that all fruits of socio-economic, scientific and technological developments that mankind has harvested for centuries will become useless if our universe is not given a chance to survive. In other words, security and development are inseparable. So for the world to exist and progress further its security and development must be ensured. As we all know full well, our planet now lacks both. This situation is aggravated by, among other things, the new-born scourge of terrorism that is now threatening peace and security across the globe. The perceived fear of the possible use or threat of use of weapons of mass destruction by State or non-State players, and of terrorists likely to have access to those weapons, cannot be neglected. Is it not therefore high time that we set out to work seriously, within the framework of the United Nations, towards building a better world, a world free of weapons of mass destruction and of old and new menaces? Humankind has every reason to hope for a day when the major part of the resources of the world will eventually be diverted from acquiring the means for our self-destruction to our self-survival and sustainable development. That day certainly will come if together we all persevere in our common endeavours.

Mr. Chitaia (Georgia): Let me begin by congratulating you, Sir, on your assumption of the chairmanship of the First Committee. I should like also to extend our congratulations to the members of the Bureau. I assure you of my delegation's support as you lead the Committee's important work.

Perhaps not since the worst days of the cold-war confrontation has the world's security and stability been challenged to the degree that it is today. The threat of the possible spread of weapons of mass destruction makes evident the need for increased collective efforts. September 11, 2001 made abundantly clear the kind of danger that the world community is exposed to with the possible acquisition of weapons of mass destruction and their means of delivery by terrorist groups. There is prevailing concern associated with the perilous links being developed between terrorist groups and rogue, unstable regimes. It is through strengthening and improving the existing disarmament and non-proliferation regimes — the main objective of the Committee — that these new challenges must be addressed. Furthermore, the United Nations, in particular the Security Council, must demonstrate more decisiveness and courage in its reaction to broken commitments, ill-defined national interests, and cold-war-era mentality.

In our view, the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons remains the cornerstone of the non-proliferation regime. Its further strengthening through the achievement of its universality and the enhancement of its inspection mechanism must be a priority. Georgia attaches great importance to the safeguards system of the International Atomic Energy Agency, including the Additional Protocols, as the instrumental parts of the regime.

The possibility of chemical or biological weapons and agents being acquired by terrorist groups is a threat that warrants particular attention. Both the chemical and biological Conventions should be further reinforced at both national and international levels, by the strengthening of transparency, verification and national compliance mechanisms.

In the context of the increasing danger of arms proliferation and terrorism, allow me to share with the Committee the achievements my country has made in this regard. Despite its difficulties, and with active support and assistance from our partners, Georgia successfully completed the anti-criminal and anti-terrorist operation in the Pankisi Gorge. We freed the territory from illegal armed groups and seized a considerable number of arms and ammunition. The

issue has been successfully resolved. On the other hand, the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons still continues unabated in many parts of the world. We join those delegations that believe that the momentum of the United Nations Programme of Action should be maintained and further enhanced. We should take stock of the recommendations of the United Nations Group of Governmental Experts on the development of a diversified, multilateral instrument to identify and trace illicit small arms and light weapons.

As the international community continues to seek ways to improve multilateral arms control, disarmament, and non-proliferation regimes by achieving universality and better verification mechanisms, we cannot turn a blind eye to the related fundamental issues that threaten peace and security. One such issue that presents a direct threat to peace and security, particularly with its inextricable links with disarmament, is unresolved conflicts. Protracted problems resulting in the creation of uncontrolled territories, have become a breeding ground for illegal arms trafficking, the proliferation of dangerous materials, and terrorism. Closer ties between the separatists and the terrorists are increasingly being forged. The Abkhazia and South Ossetia regions of Georgia are no exception to these threats and dangers. The conflict in Abkhazia, Georgia, where the efforts of the United Nations for more than 10 years have yielded no tangible results, remains a serious potential threat to Georgia and the region.

For a decade now the peace process has been held hostage to one particular country that chooses to follow double standards when it comes to pursuing stated goals, fulfilling international commitments, and facilitating the peace process. Both the Abkhazia and South Ossetia regions of Georgia, territories nurtured by Russia, have as a result developed into terrorist enclaves with an increasingly aggressive process of militarization. Huge amounts of armaments, anti-personnel mines and ammunition have accumulated in these territories. Unprotected borders of these separatist regions with the Russian Federation have turned into a regular route for illegal arms trafficking. Despite our repeated calls, the problem of the proliferation of small arms in Abkhazia continues unabated due, in no small part, to the illegal operation there of a Russian military base. Despite our numerous requests for the expeditious and transparent removal of the base, the Russian Federation refuses to uphold the commitments made under the Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe. We have demonstrated our flexibility regarding this issue but we are still faced with a situation where a foreign military base is operating in the country against the recipient's wishes.

Other unilateral illegal actions undertaken by the representatives of the regional authorities of the Russian Federation significantly damage the peace process. The railway link between Sochi and Sokhumi is still operating. The granting of Russian citizenship to the Abkhaz population en masse has never slowed down. Russian passports issued to the inhabitants of the secessionist region have already fallen into the hands of terrorists who are making the best use of free passage into and out of Russia through the Abkhaz and Ossetian sections of the Georgian-Russian border, where a visa-free regime has been unilaterally imposed by Russia.

The situation in this particular enclave of instability poses the threat of nuclear terrorism. The Institute of Physics and Technology in Sokhumi, Abkhazia, which falls under the actual control of Russian authorities, is our primary concern, where the conditions for the storage of radioactive materials, according to an International Atomic Energy Agency assessment, are deplorable. As part of the larger problem, I should like to state that since 1995, 197 unaccounted-for sources of radiation have been found in Georgia, left behind by the Russian Army. The death toll of victims from that exposure is increasing every day. We call upon all States to assist Georgia, and other States in a similar situation, to address this problem.

Finally, during these debates a consensus on the need for a revitalization of the First Committee seems to be emerging. We do hope that the Committee will find ways to update itself so as to better respond to the new threats and challenges. In this regard we support the efforts of individual States and of regional groups to improve the effectiveness of the First Committee.

Mr. Ikouebe (Congo) (*spoke in French*): It is my pleasure to speak on behalf of the Congolese delegation and warmly to congratulate you, Sir, on your election to the chairmanship of the Committee and also to congratulate the members of the Bureau. We assure you of our full cooperation in ensuring that this session will be productive. My delegation is also grateful to your predecessor, Mr. Matia Mulumba Semakula Kiwanuka, Ambassador and Permanent

Representative of Uganda, and to the members of the outgoing Bureau for having guided the Committee's work so skillfully. We take this opportunity also to congratulate Mr. Nobuyasu Abe on his appointment to head the Department for Disarmament Affairs. The important speech that he gave at the opening of our work will provide useful guidance.

A number of delegations before me have expressed serious concern that the disarmament process is going slowly and that the threat of weapons of mass destruction continues to hang over mankind 25 years after the first special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament. They have also noted repeatedly the need to relaunch the work of the Conference on Disarmament, the single multilateral negotiating forum for disarmament which, for the fifth year running, has yet to agree on its programme of work. We share these concerns and state clearly that the disarmament objectives in general are far from being achieved when the challenges that we face are becoming more numerous, particularly in the light of the rise of international terrorism. In an international context in which we see further threats to peace and international security, accession to the international instruments on disarmament is vital for us all. Therefore we must strive to ensure the universalization of the various instruments on disarmament, the non-proliferation of nuclear weapons and on putting an end to the arms race.

My country, which acceded to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) on 23 October 1978, calls upon those countries that have not yet done so to accede to that Treaty. Of course, this structure for disarmament must be based on full respect for the commitments that have been made and the obligations undertaken. Congo considers that the holding of the First Biennial Meeting of States to Consider the Implementation of the Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects deserves praise, particularly since in the report submitted by States we have been able to see that important measures have been taken at every level and that civil society is now fully committed to face up to that other scourge, namely the illegal trafficking in small arms and light weapons.

My delegation is following this work closely and we hosted the seminar organized by the United Nations on this issue. My delegation is following with interest the drafting of an international instrument, launched by France and Switzerland, to trace and mark small arms and light weapons, and we guarantee our full support for their work. We are all aware of the fact that the weapons being used every day in Africa to kill are neither biological nor chemical but are quite simply small arms and light weapons. Nevertheless they are causing just as much destruction and death. For that reason we call upon the Committee to pay particular attention to the draft resolutions that have been submitted on this issue, which my country totally supports.

The potential development of new nuclear weapons and the appearance of new military doctrines, as well as the lack of commitment by the nuclear Powers to an irreversible nuclear disarmament process, are all factors destabilizing all that has been done in the area of disarmament. My country therefore calls upon the nuclear-weapon Powers to assume the responsibilities that come with that status and to respect the commitment that was made at the 2000 NPT Review Conference to destroy their arsenals.

A world free of nuclear, chemical and biological weapons, and indeed of all weapons, is not just a dream world. That world can become a reality if we all really desire it. We see each year the growth in the scale of military expenditure. In 2002 it was $850 billion. What a waste, particularly given the enormous need in areas such as education, efforts to counteract the effects of the HIV/AIDS pandemic, and efforts to counteract poverty.

Therefore, being aware of the need to pool our efforts, to limit as far as possible the threats which weigh upon all our countries, the countries of Central Africa have organized themselves in order to create stability in a zone that is already the victim of many tensions. We cannot repeat often enough the role that is to be played here by the United Nations Standing Advisory Committee on Security Questions in Central Africa. Among the other measures that have already been taken, thanks to its support, we cite the following: the non-aggression pact, the adoption of agreements in order to put in place a multinational force in Central Africa, the creation of a rapid alert system, and a peace council in Central Africa. All these bodies maintain a continued and productive dialogue among the countries of Central Africa. Hence, meeting within the context of the Central African Economic and Monetary Community, they were able to stabilize the situation in

the Central African Republic by sending a peacekeeping force following the events of 15 March 2003 which undermined the constitutional order in that country. Similarly, they resolved the crisis that occurred in the Democratic Republic of Sao Tome and Principe in order to re-establish constitutional power that had been interrupted on 16 July 2003. We count upon the support of international organizations and bilateral partners for the consolidation of peace in Central Africa.

I would be remiss if I did not refer with some pride to the fact that my country, which acceded to the Ottawa Convention on 4 May 2001, held a workshop on the implementation of that Convention on 7 and 8 May 2003 in Brazzaville. Delegates from the Democratic Republic of Congo took part in that workshop. It was organized with the assistance of the Centre for Coordinated Action Against Mines in the Democratic Republic of Congo. My country, within the framework of that agreement, has destroyed its stock of anti-personnel mines, which it had never used, on 9 and 13 September 2003. Those operations were supported by Canada and the United Nations and we reiterate here our gratitude to them. We are pleased that more and more States are acceding to the Ottawa Convention which now has 136 States parties. It is therefore an opportunity for my country to welcome the success of the Fifth Meeting of States Parties, which was held in Bangkok in September 2003. That Meeting noted that considerable progress had been made since the entry into force of the Convention and gave further impetus to efforts to ensure that it becomes a universal instrument.

The issues of peace, security and the consolidation of national unity lie at the heart of our concerns and our Head of State, His Excellency Mr. Denis Sassou-Nguesso, is particularly involved. It is within this framework that we saw on 17 March 2003 an agreement thanks to which peace has returned to the whole territory of the Republic of Congo. The establishment of a commissariat for the reintegration of ex-combatants has allowed the collection and destruction of 11,400 small arms and light weapons between July 2000 and December 2003 within the framework of a disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programme for ex-combatants. That programme requires more support than we have. In order to complete this project we count on the support of our bilateral and multilateral partners.

There are no small steps forward in the area of disarmament because each step forward counts. Therefore, my delegation supports all efforts at the international, regional and subregional levels to ensure that there is security for all.

The Chairman: That concludes the list of speakers for this meeting. The Chair has been informed by Conference Services that the Committee has been given an extra 10 minutes, that is until 6.10 p.m.

I shall now call on the representative of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea who wishes to speak in exercise of the right of reply. Before doing so, I again remind members that the Committee will follow the procedure that I have outlined at previous meetings of the Committee.

Mr. Jon Yong Ryong (Democratic People's Republic of Korea): The delegation of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea would like to clarify its position once again on the solution of the nuclear issue between the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and the United States, with respect to the statements made by some delegations, including the United States and South Korea, which referred to the nuclear issue on 7 October 2003.

The nuclear issue on the Korean Peninsula is in essence the product of the United States hostile policy towards the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. Therefore the prospect of a peaceful solution between the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and the United States depends totally on whether or not the United States has any will to abandon its hostile policy towards the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. Nevertheless, the United States only repeats its unilateral demand for the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to abandon its nuclear programme first without making any reference to changing its hostile policy, which is the key to the solution of the nuclear issue. In fact the United States is disclosing its intention to disarm the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and overthrow the Government of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, and is not willing to resolve the nuclear issue. The United States threatens the Democratic People's Republic of Korea with its nuclear weapons by listing it as part of the "axis of evil" and as the target of its preemptive strike. In order to cope with it, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea's effort to have a nuclear deterrent deserves to be called a right of self-defence. This is

also a serious lesson that the United States armed invasion of Iraq showed the world. The delegation of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea takes this opportunity to urge South Korea to hold to the spirit of national independence aligned with the spirit of the North-South Joint Declaration, by not cooperating with outside forces against their fellow countrymen.

The Chairman: As I have stated previously, two delegations have been unable to move their statements forward. Consequently, it is my intention to allow those two remaining delegations to make their statements tomorrow. Following their respective statements the Committee will conduct its informal exchange of views on ways to improve its methods of work.

The meeting rose at 6.05 p.m.